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DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/I

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [IZ](#)  
SUBJECT: PRT KIRKUK: KURDISH CAMPAIGN BEHAVIOR - UNHEEDED  
INTIMIDATION AND VANDALISM

Classified By: PRT Kirkuk Team Leader Gabriel Escobar for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. This is a Kirkuk Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) message.

12. (C) Summary. Politically motivated intimidation, vandalism and threats of violence in Kirkuk did not subside following the provincial governor's emergency meeting, calling on political parties to cease irresponsible behavior during the campaign. In many cases, the level of tension increased as the result of increased pressure by Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) pressure on smaller parties. In separate meetings with Iraqi Turkoman Front (ITF), Goran Movement, and PUK, PRT and USD-N appealed to all parties to refrain from threats and intimidation in the campaign process in Kirkuk. Goran leader Jalal Jahwar claimed he was under pressure from his supporters to respond in-kind to PUK intimidation. ITF leader Arshad Salihi, the victim of an attempted assassination, said his party and the Turkoman community feel brutalized by the KDP and PUK. They trusted neither the provincial government nor the Iraqi police (IP) and wanted the U.S. and Iraqi Army (IA) to take control of the city before violence broke out. PUK Kirkuk Leader Rifat Abdullah Hussein played down reports of intimidation, asserting that smaller parties were conducting a smear campaign in an effort to do better at the polls. Hussein recognized that PUK's win-at-all costs approach could be damaging the PUK and the interests of the KDP, and promised to try to calm the situation down. The KDP declined a request for a meeting.  
END SUMMARY.

#### CLAIMS OF KDP-PUK INTIMIDATION

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13. (C) Just two days after the Kirkuk provincial governor called an emergency meeting to ask party leaders to refrain from using intimidation and threats of violence during the campaign, complaints from smaller parties about PUK and KDP-led acts of vandalism, shootings, and harassment continued. Goran leaders reached out to the PRT to say that the governor's message failed to produce any improvement in the levels of tension in the city and pressed for USG action. Independent Citadel Party leader Sami Jaf told PRT Team Leader on February 14, that he had called a press conference to introduce his party list and only one independent Turkoman journalist attended. That journalist reported that PUK members had warned journalists not to attend. On the evening of February 14, 12th IA Commanding General Amir informed USF-I that the police were struggling to contain potential violence in the city.

14. (C) On the evening of June 15, Goran leader Jahwar said his supporters were coming under increasing pressure from the PUK and PUK-controlled IP inside Kirkuk City. Jahwar claimed that IP targeted and detained Goran supporters on charges

ranging from improper vehicle registration to vandalism. Jahwar also claimed that IP turned a blind eye to PUK supporters who were blocking streets, firing weapons in public, and committing political acts of vandalism. Jahwar stated that his supporters were bearing the brunt of KDP and PUK intimidation and he was coming under increased pressure to respond. USD-N and the PRT urged Jahwar to allow time for the USG and Iraqi authorities to explore concrete ways to end the political intimidation.

15. (C) ITF leader Arshad Salihi, a victim of an attempted assassination on February 13, told USF-I that the Turkoman community was the most vulnerable community in Kirkuk since it had no organized militia or intelligence apparatus and had Qit had no organized militia or intelligence apparatus and had no control over the police. They trusted neither the Iraqi Police nor the Provincial Government. They were mortally fearful of the Peshmerga and Assayesh. Salihi said ITF supporters had been extra-judicially detained and passed USF-I a list of prisoners he believed were arrested solely for their political affiliation.

16. (C) Salihi commented the USM made a mistake supporting local commanders who refused having an outside general officer take control of the local IA forces and order them into the city. Salihi pressed for the USF to change its position and allow an IA Commander partnered with USF, to take control of the city. Otherwise, he warned, the situation would become unbearable for his community.

PUK DISCOUNTS CLAIMS...

17. (C) Rifat Abdullah Hussein, local PUK party leader,

discounted reports of political intimidation and threats of violence. He claimed the smaller parties were conducting a smear campaign against the PUK in an effort to erode public support. Hussein cautioned the USG about giving credence to Goran's complaints. In many cases, Hussein asserted, Goran was disguising its people as PUK supporters and shooting up their own neighborhoods in order to create the impression that the PUK was causing problems. Hussein claimed the PUK was also a victim of intimidation and said he had also been shot at over the weekend.

...BUT TAKES NOTE

18. (C) USD-N told Hussein that USF are working to create a safe atmosphere for the national elections and expressed concern about reported incidents of police manipulation, political use of the Peshmerga and reports of Assayesh intimidation against Goran supporters. (Note: Recently at one of the combined U.S./IP checkpoints, a USD-N officer overheard an Iraqi police officer ask others to direct all suspected Goran supporters to him. End Note.) USD-N Commanding General opined that the PUK win-at-all-costs attitude was damaging the PUK's reputation and in turn, damaging the KRG's interests. He warned that USG support to train and equip KSF would fade if evidence points to Peshmerga being used as a political party militia. Finally, USD-N Commanding General added that the USG will investigate every credible report of Peshmerga intimidation and told Hussein to deliver the message to his KDP partners.

19. (C) A visibly shaken Hussein agreed that there had been some misconduct on the part of some "youthful" supporters who had gotten swept up in the excitement of the campaign. He added that the first few days of the campaign were the most agitated because groups were covering the city with posters but now that this was finished, security would certainly improve. Without noting the irony, he asked, "the IP commander is a PUK member, why would we create problems for him?" He said he already told the Assayesh and Peshmerga to remain nonpartisan, but he would do so again. Hussein stated that the PUK wanted to maintain a good relationship with the U.S. out of respect for the American people. Hussein said he

would relay USG concerns to President and PUK General Secretary Jalal Talabani who was campaigning in Kirkuk. Hussein offered to make a televised statement urging calm.

¶10. (C) COMMENT: The potential for Kurd-on-Kurd violence is the greatest threat to the stability of Kirkuk during this campaign period. Despite Goran's claims that it has no means to retaliate violently to KDP-PUK intimidation, it is under pressure from its supporters to respond in kind. With its sizeable public support and rising levels of frustration, violence could spread to areas that have not yet been affected. The PRT and USF-I will continue to closely monitor campaign behavior. END COMMENT.  
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